

TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH, RI
RESOLUTION # 2019-xx-xx A

RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND CONDUCT A SAFETY REVIEW OF EAST
MAIN ROAD WITH TOWN OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND
INCORPORATION OF GREEN AND COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES INTO TOWN ORDINANCES AND THE
COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

WHEREAS, East Main Road is one of two main arterial roads serving the Town of Portsmouth and Aquidneck Island and is also a major evacuation route for island residents; and

WHEREAS, East Main Road is a state-maintained road; and

WHEREAS, there were 180 accidents on East Main Road in 2018 and there have been 111 accidents in 2019 (through August 20th); of those, 39 accidents resulted in injuries in 2018, including one fatality, and 27 accidents have resulted in injuries through August 20, 2019; and

WHEREAS, using an average cost of \$12,000 per accident, \$390,000 per injury, and \$6.8M per fatality, the accidents on East Main Road in 2018 and 2019 alone have cost \$36M; and

WHEREAS, several of those accidents involved utility poles - including three accidents between August 12 and 19, 2019; and

WHEREAS, the narrow lanes and close proximity of the utility poles on East Main Road to the roadway presents a safety and resiliency hazard, limits the ability for additional roadway improvements, and diminishes the scenic nature of the road; and

WHEREAS, based on an Annual Average Daily Traffic value of 22,100 vehicles (in 2000, per RIDOT), this equates to a crash injury rate of approximately 110 injuries per HMVMT (Hundred Million Vehicle Miles Traveled) and 1.67 fatalities per HMVMT along the 4.5 mile stretch from the Middletown line to Turnpike Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the State of Rhode Island passed a Complete Streets law in 2012, "Safe Access to Public Roads," which requires "the state to consider people of all ages and abilities and all appropriate forms of transportation when planning roadway projects;" and

WHEREAS, East Main Road north of Turnpike Ave. was re-paved and sidewalks improved in 2018-2019, with no shoulder or bicycle accommodations incorporated, and Middle Road south of Schoolhouse Ln. was paved in 2017, with no shoulder, pedestrian or bicycle accommodations incorporated; and

WHEREAS, Aquidneck Island's impaired drinking waters pose greater potential for health risks and increase the cost of treatment; and

WHEREAS, stormwater runoff from developed areas is a primary cause of pollution to our drinking water supply, fishing areas, and beaches; and

WHEREAS, best management practices greatly reduce stormwater runoff from roadways and parking lots and can utilize natural systems that have the benefit of beautifying these areas with vegetation; and

WHEREAS, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations have been demonstrated to increase safety for all users, reduce pollution, promote public health, and increase economic development, particularly for tourism-dependent communities like Portsmouth; and

WHEREAS, Major Amendment #19 to the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) has roadway improvements along East Main Road planned for 2022 and 2024, while the "East Main Road Shared Use Path" is planned for 2020; and

WHEREAS, our draft Comprehensive Community Plan states that an efficient transportation network is "essential to the economic vitality and quality of life in Portsmouth;" and

WHEREAS, East Main Road is a primary bus route through Portsmouth, with public bus stops roughly every 1,300 ft, in addition to the dozens of school children that are picked up and dropped off by school buses along the road every day; and

WHEREAS, planned improvements to East Main Road are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to comprehensively address safety concerns, reduce pollution, promote public health, and support economic development; and

WHEREAS, incorporating safety and infrastructure improvements and providing transportation alternatives is a critical element in the Town Center Plan and requires a comprehensive approach that addresses all of East Main Road; and

WHEREAS, implementing Green and Complete Streets policies into our Town Ordinances and Comprehensive Community Plan is an effective way to help address safety and usability concerns for all users on East Main Road and other state and local roadways and protect our drinking water and the scenic recreational and working waters of Narragansett Bay while beautifying our roadways and parking lots.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Portsmouth Town Council requests the State of Rhode Island immediately conduct a safety review of East Main Road with the involvement of Town officials and the broader community to minimize future harm to our community and prioritize the road for safety improvements, including but not limited to: additional signals, turning lanes, sidewalks, bike lanes or side paths, bus stops, pedestrian lighting and crosswalks as part of the programmed STIP improvements or before; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT our Town Solicitor draft a letter to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation reminding them of the Complete Streets Law and advising them that the Town of Portsmouth expects all state road construction projects in Portsmouth to meet the law's standard and that the Town of Portsmouth is ready and willing to work with state officials to ensure the successful, timely, and cost-effective implementation of this law on state road construction projects in the Town of Portsmouth; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Town of Portsmouth hereby requests the East Main Road STIP improvements incorporate the undergrounding of utilities on East Main Road to provide additional right-of-way for the necessary improvements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Town of Portsmouth is committed to assisting the State of Rhode Island in identifying any and all resources necessary to offset the cost of undergrounding said utilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Portsmouth Planning Department work with the State of Rhode Island for funding and technical assistance in developing a Bicycle Master Plan for the town to ensure bicycle improvements made in concert with road improvements are strategic in nature; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Portsmouth Planning Department amend our draft Comprehensive Community Plan to identify Green and Complete Streets as a primary transportation goal, with specific policies and actions to facilitate implementation by state, town, and private entities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Portsmouth Planning Department work with local and regional resources to draft Green and Complete Streets Ordinances that require all public and private projects (roads, drives, and parking areas) in the Town of Portsmouth to construct to Green and Complete Streets standards, for implementation in Portsmouth in 2020.

LET IT BE KNOWN, this resolution was passed and adopted by the Portsmouth Town Council this 9th day of September, 2019.

Kevin Aguiar, President
Portsmouth Town Council

ATTEST: _____
Jennifer West, Town Clerk